

Petraeus or in their calls for a hasty withdrawal of troops based on political timelines rather than the security and stability of Iraq.

If we learned anything from that debate, it is that our national security and the stability of the region outweigh short-term political calculations.

It is clear that our Nation's efforts must be integrated in Afghanistan, just as they were in Iraq. It is worth remembering our forces in Afghanistan have been conducting a counterterrorism campaign for more than 8 years, and this has been insufficient to keep the Taliban from regaining the momentum in Afghanistan. American and Afghan security forces must do more to ensure the Afghan populace that it will be protected, something undermined by withdrawal deadlines.

The surge of forces into Afghanistan ordered by the President is not yet complete. General Petraeus is the right General to command this operation and he should be confirmed quickly.

Madam President, my understanding is that the senior Senator from Washington has a unanimous-consent request she would like to propound.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1237

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I thank the Republican leader.

I came to the floor last week and spoke in support of S. 1237, which is the Homeless Veterans and Other Veterans Health Care Authorities Act of 2010, an extremely important and timely bill that will help many women, women with children, and men with children today who served our country, who have come home and do not have the support and services they need and end up homeless on our streets. So I come to the Senate floor today to urge our colleagues to pass this bill quickly.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 360, S. 1237, the Homeless Veterans and Other Veterans Health Care Authorities Act; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be considered; that an Akaka amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; the substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; that the committee-reported title amendment be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I will have to object on behalf of my colleague, Senator COBURN from Oklahoma, he has some concerns about this legislation, particularly, as he indicates in a letter I will ask to have printed in the RECORD, that it be paid

for up front so the promises to America's veterans are, in fact, kept. So I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the letter from Senator COBURN to myself on this matter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, June 24, 2010.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR MCCONNELL: I am requesting that I be consulted before the Senate enters into any unanimous-consent agreements regarding S. 1237, the Homeless Veterans and Other Veterans Health Care Authorities Act of 2010.

I strongly believe we must honor our commitment to our nation's veterans as well as our taxpayers. This means we must fulfill the promises made to veterans who made sacrifices defending our freedom, but in a fiscally responsible manner that doesn't bankrupt our country, endangering those very freedoms for which they sacrificed.

This bill authorizes \$3.4 billion in new spending over the next five years. Yet, the legislation does not reduce spending by other government programs to pay for this new spending. At this time, when our nation is projected to add more than a trillion dollars a year to our already unsustainable \$13 trillion national debt, it is irresponsible to authorize any new spending that is not paid for because the end result will either be a false promise to our veterans or a lower standard of living for the children and grandchildren of those veterans who will be burdened with the debt.

I would like to pay for this legislation by reducing lower priority and wasteful spending elsewhere in the government. There are many options to do this, including:

Eliminating nonessential government travel which would save \$10 billion over ten years;

Reducing unnecessary printing costs of government documents which would save \$4.4 billion over ten years;

Disposing of unneeded and unused government property which would collect up to \$15 billion;

Eliminating bonuses to government contractors whose projects are over budget or behind scheduled;

Collecting \$3 billion in unpaid federal taxes from government employees, including nearly \$2.5 million owed by Senate staff; and

Rescinding the \$100 million increase Congress approved for its own budget this year.

There are also hundreds of duplicative, outdated, and wasteful programs that could be eliminated to pay for this bill.

Several months ago, the Senate passed S. 1963, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, which authorized \$3.6 billion in new caregiver benefits for some veterans. At that time, I warned that unless they bill was paid for—which I offered amendments to do its—passage would be “an empty promise to veterans and benefits no one except perhaps the career politicians who will claim credit for doing something to help veterans without really having to make any difficult choices.” Unfortunately, I was right.

The same is likely to be true of this bill. It contains billions of dollars of additional promises which are unaffordable to taxpayers and uncertain for veterans in need.

Veterans and taxpayers should be weary of unpaid for, election year promises made by Washington politicians. With the percentage of Americans approving of Congress' performance barely above single digits, more broken promises and red ink will only bring greater disdain to this institution.

I would, therefore, insist as a condition of my consent for the passage of this bill that the new and expanded benefits in this legislation be paid for upfront so the promises it makes to veterans are kept.

Again, thank you for protecting my rights regarding S. 1237, the Homeless Veterans and Other Veterans Health Care Authorities Act of 2010.

Sincerely,

TOM A. COBURN, M.D.

U.S. Senator.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I again thank the Republican leader. I know he is objecting on behalf of another Senator. I just wish to say that this is such an important bill.

We had an amazing woman come and visit last week. Her name is Natalie, and she has two young children. She is living in Issaquah, in my home State of Washington. She has been through some very tough times. She is a Navy veteran. She is a single mom. She came home from serving our country and ended up without a place to live, and they are now living on the streets. She, like any mom, wanted to do everything she could to take care of her kids and provide them the kind of quality of life every one of us does, but she could not find a stable job or income and ended up on the streets.

Natalie became homeless in 2007 when she could not find work and had to move out of the house she was staying in.

Natalie wanted nothing more than to provide her two children with the stable and loving home every family deserves, so she fought to secure transitional housing, and she was very fortunate to find a program called Hopelink in Washington State that gave her the support she needed to get back on her feet.

Natalie is now back in stable housing, taking care of her children and advancing in her nursing career. She came to Washington, DC, last Tuesday to help make sure no other family has to face the challenges she overcame so bravely.

Unfortunately, not every family gets the support that Natalie's did.

Homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children are two terribly vulnerable groups that are growing by the day.

Back in my home State of Washington, veterans service organizations and homeless providers have told me they are seeing more homeless veterans coming for help than ever before.

And unfortunately, more and more of these veterans are women, have young children, or both.

In fact, female veterans are between two and four times as likely to be homeless as their civilian counterparts and they have unique needs and often require specialized services.

That is why I introduced the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Act and it is why it's so important that we move quickly to pass it.

My bill would take three big steps forward toward tackling the serious problems facing this vulnerable group.

First of all, it would make more front-line homeless service providers eligible to receive special needs grants.

This would help organizations in Washington State and across the country help support families like Natalie's.

It would also expand special needs grants to cover homeless male veterans with children as well as the dependents of homeless veterans themselves.

And it would extend the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program to provide: workforce training, job counseling, child care services, and placement services to homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children.

It is so important that we not just provide immediate support but we also make sure our veterans have the resources and support they need to get back on their feet.

This is a very personal issue for me.

Growing up, I saw firsthand the many ways military service can affect both veterans and their families.

My father served in World War II and was among the first soldiers to land on Okinawa. He came home as a disabled veteran and was awarded the Purple Heart.

Like many soldiers of his generation, my father did not talk about his experiences during the war. In fact, we only really learned about them by reading his journals after he passed away.

And I think that experience offers a larger lesson about veterans in general. They are reluctant to call attention to their service, and they are reluctant to ask for help.

That is why we have got to publicly recognize their sacrifices and contributions.

It is up to us to make sure that they get the recognition they have earned.

And it is up to us to guarantee they get the services and support they deserve.

This bill passed through the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee with strong bi-partisan support.

Because supporting our veterans should not be about politics, it should be about what kind of country we want the United States to be. And about what our priorities are as a nation.

That is why I am proud to stand here today: for Natalie, her children, and families just like hers across the country.

At this time, with our economy struggling—it is a very tough time, particularly for our veterans who are returning home—the most vulnerable population today is our women because many of the transitional housing and projects for our veterans don't have facilities for women or for women with children or, as a matter of fact, for

men who are veterans coming home to young children.

So this is an extremely important piece of legislation. This had bipartisan support coming out of our committee. I will keep coming to the floor to ask for unanimous consent because I cannot go home and look at someone who served our country with distinction and honor who today is living on the street because the Senate is objecting. I will just let my colleagues know I will keep working on this because it is the right thing to do.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

GULF OILSPILL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I wish to give the Senate a report on the gulf oilspill.

Mother Nature is now developing hurricane and it is very likely within a couple of days of reaching hurricane strength, which is 75 miles per hour or greater, but Mother Nature is smiling on us in that it is going on a more westerly track. It will probably go into the coast at northern Mexico, possibly southern Texas, but it will keep it away from heading into the area to the east of Louisiana where the oilspill is. Of course, if it had gone on that trajectory, then one of the worst nightmares would be that it takes all that oil on the surface, and in the rage of a hurricane, the counterclockwise rotation of the winds would take that right on to shore over the barrier islands, into the bays and estuaries where oil, once contaminating all the marsh grasses, becomes so difficult to get out.

The effects of that we don't know. It could be for years to come, just as we don't know the effects of the subsurface oil that is there, that the scientists have identified, that BP denies, that even some of our Federal officials in NOAA deny. We are waiting on their report. Of course, we won't know the effects of that for years. We have a lot of uncertainty here. But at least for the moment, the hurricane is not bearing down on the oilspill, although let me remind my colleagues that we have a very active hurricane season coming up.

What it is going to do, this first hurricane, is make the seas choppy and the waves large, even that far away. As a result, the skimming operations are going to be thwarted.

That brings me to the topic of the skimming operations.

I am grateful, since the U.S. Navy had identified 27 additional small skimmers that are stationed in ports around the country, that those have now been tasked to come to our inland waterways that are calm waters such as ports so that when the oil comes through the passes, through the inlets and gets into those calm water bays, we will have those skimmers there positioned to try to get it skimmed up before it gets into the marsh grasses. But why did it take so long? Why, of the 27, have only 9 been put on trailers and are on their way to the gulf? Why are the remaining 18 having to go through the legal ramifications, which I understand the law is the law, not to be completed until June 30, which is tomorrow, but why wasn't this done weeks ago? Because people do not have the sense of urgency that we do down on the gulf coast. They are not seeing their lives destroyed and their livelihoods eliminated and their culture completely changed.

Of course, the effects of this for years, with 60,000—now people are finally getting around to acknowledging that it is 60,000—barrels of oil a day gushing into the gulf. It is filling up the gulf. It is affecting us and our way of life.

There are how many States on the gulf? Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the big one, with the most coastline, Florida, my native land. How many is that? That is five. The remaining 45 States are not affected. They can see it nightly on the TV. They can rant and rave, and they can see that gusher that continues. It is there on TV for us to see, and we can be mad about that. But unless one lives there and understands the daily effect on people's lives, they can't get that sense of outrage we have. So is it any wonder I have such impatience when five of my counties on the gulf coast have submitted requisition forms for the moneys they have advanced and they still have not been paid? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see people lose incomes because cancellations are coming in on a daily basis? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see local governments not being able to plan on their budgets because they don't know what their local tax revenue is going to be because of a diminution of business? Is it any wonder those of us on the gulf have a sense of outrage as we see the fear, the trepidation, the anxiety about the future about what their livelihoods are?

I am going down to the White House now to talk about the one thing we can make something good come out of this travesty, and that is the future of trying to wean ourselves from our dependence on oil by aggressively going after